

SPECIAL CONCERNS OF OLDER ADULTS FOLLOWING A DISASTER

Each age group is vulnerable in unique ways to the stresses of a disaster. Different issues and concerns become relevant during the emotional recovery. In older adults some disaster stress reactions may be experienced immediately, while others may appear months later. Here are some of the symptoms you or a loved one may be having.

BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS

- Withdrawal and isolation
- Reluctance to leave home
- Mobility limitations
- Relocation adjustment problems

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Worsening of chronic illness
- Sleep disorders
- Somatic symptoms
- Physical or sensory limitations
- Embarrassment about receiving “handouts”

EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

- Depression
- Despair about losses
- Apathy
- Confusion - Disorientation
- Suspicion
- Agitation - Anger
- Fears of institutionalization
- Anxiety with unfamiliar surroundings

Many who survive a disaster experience a strong desire to withdraw from others. They may withdraw even from those to whom they are the closest. Overcoming the tendency to isolate themselves takes real strength and discipline. A few ways to break the isolation barrier are to:

TALK: It takes courage to reveal what you are thinking and feeling to someone else. Talking can be very comforting and healing. Talking is worth it.

ASK FOR HELP: Research shows that people who ask for help come through disasters stronger and healthier than those who view seeking help as a weakness.

BE WITH PEOPLE: Life does not return to normal overnight. You have survived a disaster. That doesn't mean your life is over or that you don't deserve to be happy again. Do something good for yourself. Now is the time to do it!

If you or someone you know is experiencing any of these symptoms, don't hesitate to call.

"WE'RE HERE FOR YOU."